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Watergate Burglar Quizzed on CIA

By Jack Anderson and Les Whitten

In secret testimony before the Rockefeller Commission, Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis has confessed that he was involved in several CIA assassination plots.

But he has emphatically denied charges that he was in Dallas on the day President Kennedy was shot or that he had anything to do with the Kennedy assassination.

Sturgis offered to take a lie detector test if the commission had any doubt that he was telling the truth. No polygraph test, however, was administered.

Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt Jr., who was also called before the commission to answer the same charges, delivered similar denials that he was linked in any way to the tragic events in Dallas.

Questioned for two days by senior counsel Robert Olsen, Sturgis described assassination plots in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guatamala, Haiti and Panama. He had participated in the plotting against leaders, both high and low, in all these countries, he testified.

The conspirators included persons he knew to be connected with the CIA, he said. His own role had been limited to helping "set up" assassination attempts. He had never taken part in any actual murders, he swore.

All the assassination plots, he explained, had been aimed against foreign leaders, none against American citizens. Most of the attempts had failed, he said, although he was involved in the advance work that led to the successful assassination of dictator Trujillo in the Dominican Republic.

Sturgis described Cuba as the "hub" of assassination schemes. He personally had participated in plots, he said, against several Cuban leaders from Fidel Castro on down. Sturgis had been one of Castro's commanders after the takeover of Havana. During this period, Sturgis claimed, he had reported to a CIA contact in the U.S. embassy.

The special commission, headed by Vice President Rockefeller, is examining "evidence" which allegedly links Sturgis and Hunt to the Kennedy assassination. The chief exhibit is a picture of two vagrants, resembling Sturgis and Hunt, who were picked up in Dallas after the assassination.

Upon close examination, the picture of the man who is supposed to be Sturgis does not resemble him in some important details. The relative height of the two men in the picture also doesn't correspond to the actual height of Sturgis and Hunt.

Nevertheless, counsel Olsen cross-examined Sturgis closely about the Kennedy assassination. Had Sturgis ever been in Dallas, Olsen asked. Yes, Sturgis acknowledged, "several times."

Had he been there on the day of the assassination, asked Olsen. No, said Sturgis, he had spent the day at this home in Miami. As witnesses, his wife, nephew and mother-in-law could place him in Miami on that day, he testified.

Had he gone to Dallas on the day before or after the assassination, Olsen demanded. Sturgis replied with a flat "no."

Had he ever visited the assassination site, Olsen pressed. Again Sturgis said he had not. Then he offered to take a lie detector test and answer questions about both the Kennedy assassination and his involvement in CIA assassination plots.

Sturgis also denied that he had anything to do with the assassinations of Robert F. Kennedy or Martin Luther King. He was questioned, too, about reports that the Watergate burglars had broken into the Chilean embassy in Washington. Sturgis denied that he had ever participated in the burglary of the Washington embassy but volunteered that he had once broken into the Chilean embassy in Havana.

Footnote: Both Sturgis and a spokesman for the Rockefeller Commission refused to comment on Sturgis' testimony. "The final report will speak for itself," said the spokesman.

Pentagon Prediction—The Joint Chiefs of Staff expected President Nugyen Van Thieu to lose South Vietnam all along, although the great retreat was more sudden and spectacular than they had anticipated.

As far back as Feb. 1, 1972, we reported: "The secret estimate of the Joint Chiefs is that the cease-fire will break down and the Communists ultimately will gain control of all Vietnam.

"This would mean . . . that nine years of American dying have been in vain. For the U.S. government has spilled the blood of 55,000 American boys and squandered $150 billion to prevent a Communist takeover of South Vietnam.

"One intelligence analysis suggests that a sporadic cease-fire, at least, should endure for several months . . . But once the Communist infrastructure has been rebuilt in the South, warns the analysis, the Communists will seek to end their long struggle for control of all Vietnam with a final military offensive.

"Secretly, the Joint Chiefs don't believe President Thieu can survive. He is preparing for the political ravages by tightening his military control over the country. This will make his regime even more unpopular with the people and, therefore, more vulnerable to Communist agitation.

"After Thieu has been weakened politically, Hanoi presumably will try to finish him off . . . The Joint Chiefs have grave doubts about the South Vietnamese army's ability to repel an offensive without massive American air and artillery support."

The Joint Chiefs more than two years ago predicted almost precisely what is happening.

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